



Safety 6 and 7 Checking In

Leaders,

It's an honor for me and Command Sergeant Major Ernie Bowen to serve as the 29th command team of your U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center. Our Army will fight anywhere, anytime, in all conditions, and it's our mission to help leaders, from platoon to Army command, execute operations while sustaining readiness. Over the last decade, you've committed yourselves to reducing Soldier fatalities and succeeded — a 50 percent reduction, all while conducting sustained combat operations. That trend continues today, but it's not irreversible. We must remain relentless in this fight.

It's Not About Safety – It's About Standards

Accidents and loss occur when we fail to follow standards, and this has especially been true when we enter new environments. Since Vietnam, when we entered new operational environments such as Grenada, Panama, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq, aviation and ground accidents spiked, demonstrating a training deficiency and failure to meet standards. How do we prevent the same spike in accidents when we enter the next unfamiliar environment?

Train like Your Life Depends on It

Continued rigorous, realistic training in the toughest conditions is critical in successfully maintaining our momentum as we enter the next conflict. It will allow us to master the fundamentals of our profession. Certified leaders must understand the difference between mitigating risk and being risk-averse. Individual and collective training in the demanding conditions we expect in the future provides opportunities to develop leadership skills needed to reduce loss and maintain readiness. The Army's unit training management model ensures you have the resources to execute rigorous training to standard. Additionally, training leaders to look at conditions with a sharp eye encourages critical thinking as they plan, prepare, execute and assess training. The command culture must also encourage and reward Soldiers down to the lowest levels to intervene when something isn't quite right and stop the chain of events that lead to accidents.

The Difference Between a Class A and D Can Be Luck

In FY16, we suffered 6,018 reported Class B through E accidents Armywide. Because we tend to gauge our efforts on Soldier fatalities, we are missing the bigger picture. Our analysis shows many accidents go unreported. That should be concerning to everyone. Because the difference between a Class A and D can come down to inches or seconds, we have to look at all accidents, not just those that result in a fatality. We've all heard it said that luck is the deciding vote, but the real deciders are quality training and leader development. Those alone will change seconds to weeks and inches to miles, allowing us to better see ourselves and the hazards that lie in wait.

Impact on Readiness

Despite the downward trend, the impact of accidental loss is still significant. In FY16, Class A accidents resulted in 110 fatalities which had a devastating effect on families, friends and unit readiness. Accidents don't discriminate by rank. We've lost privates and combat-hardened colonels, and they simply cannot be replaced. Additionally, our total losses across all classes cost taxpayers more than \$415 million in equipment and time lost. In operational terms, that equates to more than 30 combat training center rotations or multiple years of a combat aviation brigade's flying hour program, all of which impact readiness.

What the USACRC can do for You

Significant efforts are underway at the USACRC to ease the burden on commanders and safety professionals. We are reducing the unmanageable requirements our regulations and policies have levied on commanders. We are building a new reporting and tracking system that will allow commanders to have a dashboard of their unit safety data at their fingertips and make it easier for safety professionals to report accidents and analyze trends. Finally, we are operationalizing safety training for uniformed and civilian safety professionals to move from a checklist mentality to a training and readiness mindset.

Train hard and thank you for what you do for our Soldiers.

Readiness through Safety!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Francis', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

David J. Francis
Brigadier General, USA
Commanding